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ABSTRACT

An evaluation of the Bachelor of Science degree program in Gerontological Studies and Services (GSS) at York College of the City University of New York was undertaken. Participants in the study were enrolled in or had completed a gerontology course or had graduated with a GSS major. From a potential pool of 200 persons generated from alumni and course rosters from 1981-1986, 140 participants were surveyed by a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire included sections on demographics, education, employment, and an assessment of York College's Gerontology Program. Results indicated that most of the GSS majors/graduates were employed in the field of gerontology and were attending or had complete graduate studies in gerontology. Majors/graduates delivered an excess of 4,000 hours of community service. The GSS was shown to have accomplished its goals of mastery of entry level skills, academic preparation for graduate school, and experiential qualifications through field practicum. Study participants' recommendations for improvement included coursework in nursing home administration, increasing field practicum hours, and specific suggestions on two of the courses. Participants felt that the Adapted Physical Education Course did not focus enough on the needs of the aging adult. Over 80 percent of respondents recommended that York College develop a Master's program in Gerontology. (Survey questionnaire is included.) (ABL)

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GERONTOLOGY AND HEALTH EDUCATION AT THE BACCALAUREATE LEVEL

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GERONTOLOGY AND HEALTH EDUCATION AT THE BACCALAUREATE LEVEL

by

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In the Fall 1981, York College of the City University of New York initiated its Bachelors of Science degree program of study in Gerontological Studies and Services (GSS). The GSS major at York College (as reported in NYSAHPERD, Barley, 1983) was an ingenous response to a rapidly growing older adult population, a dirth of trained gerontologists, and a limited educational development budget. As reported to this Journal in 1983, an indepth program evaluation was then not feasible. However, five years later (Fall 1986), an evaluation of the GSS major has been completed and will be presented in this paper.

METHODS

Eligibility to participate in this investigation was determined by one or more of the following criteria: 1) currently enrolled in a gerontology course, 2) had completed a gerontology course, 3) a graduate of the GSS major at York College, and 4) a willingness to participate in the investigation. A potential pool of 200 persons was generated from course and alumni rosters within the past five years. Announcements were

sent to students enrolled in gerontology courses. The study participants (n=140) were surveyed using a self-administered questionnaire of 27 items which was disseminiated to study participants and returned to the investigators through the mail the during the Summer 1986.

As shown in Table I, 10 men and 130 women were surveyed. Ages ranged from 20 years of age to 59 years of age, with a mean of 45 years of age. The majority (71.4 %) of the black, (Table II), female participants were employed and satisfied with their jobs (90 %), and of this group (60 %) were employed in administrative/supervisory positions.

The survey of the Gerontological Studies and Services majors, as shown in Table III, is composed of four sections: 1) demographic and personal information, 2) education, 3) employment and 4) an assessment of York College's Gerontology Program. These sections were developed pursuant to a curriculum review.

The original draft of the questionnaire was reviewed and validated by a panel of 8 gerontologists. A modification of item narrative was completed based on the recommendations of the review panel. Both the original and the revised drafts of the questionnaire were pretested on two separate groups of ten students with diverse educational and cultural backgrounds. Pretesting helped identify prevalent responses and evaluate comprehension of the survey items.

Also addressed was the reliability of the participants' responses to questions in the survey. There was complete agreement between the answers given for each question.

RESULTS

Numerous gerontology programs have been designed to operationalize a philosophy revolving about an interdisciplinary view of aging. York College, a four-year liberal arts institution, initiated the City University of New York's first and only degree program in Gerontological Studies and Services.

York's GSS major has been evaluated for effectiveness in three areas which reflect the mission and goals of the College: 1) mastery of entry level skills, 2) academic preparation for the graduate school arena, and 3) experiential qualification through field practicum.

A one-time descriptive study was conducted; survey results indicate that York's GSS majors/graduates are employed in the field of gerontology (72 %), are attending or have completed graduate level studies in gerontology (54 %), and have delivered an excess of 4,000 hours of community service in the South East Queens area of New York City.

It is obvious that the GSS program of study at York College

has accomplished its initial goals: mastery of entry level skills--72 percent of GSS majors/graduates are employed in the field of gerontology, 2) academic preparation for graduate school arena--54 percent are attending or have completed graduate level studies in gerontology, and 3) experiential qualification through field practicum-- GSS majors/graduates provide over 4,000 hours of community service annually.

DISCUSSION

Study participants were asked to contribute suggestions for the improvement of the Gerontological Studies and Services major. The rationale for eliciting these open-ended responses from the study participants was the awareness that the York GSS major/graduate was now the "employed gerontologist" in the field.

Participant suggestions to improve the GSS curriculum were remarkably alike and focused on three specific content areas:

1) Study participants repeatedly recommended that Long Term Care/ Nursing Home Administration courses be developed and incorporated into the GSS course offerings;
2) Study participants strongly suggested that the minimum number of field practicum hours be increased. A review of the study participant responses for "useful" and "not useful" for each of the courses listed as required

or elective in the major design revealed that 100 % of the study participants valued the field practicum course work as "useful";

3) Study participants made specific suggestions regarding two of the required courses. Participants felt that a course in Retirement Counseling should be developed and taken after they had successfully completed the Health Counseling course.

Furthermore, the participants felt strongly that the Adapted Physical Education course for Special Populations did not sufficiently focus on the needs of the aging adult--well and frail elderly alike. Finally, over 80 percent of the participants stated that York College should develop a Master's Degree program in Gerontology. It is significant to note that the participants expressed regret that their graduate studies could not be accomplished at York College.

The investigators are pleased and excited to report (with the writing of this paper) that not only has the Bachelors of Science in Gerontological Studies and Services proven to be successful, but that the faculty and administration have begun to lay the groundwork which will ultimately result in York College's first Master's Degree program and the City University's of New York's only graduate degree program in the discipline of Gerontology.

Reference

Barley, L.R. "The development of a gerontology program", New York State Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. (Fall) 33, 4:6-7, 1983.

Table I

Study Participants by Age and Sex

(n= 140)

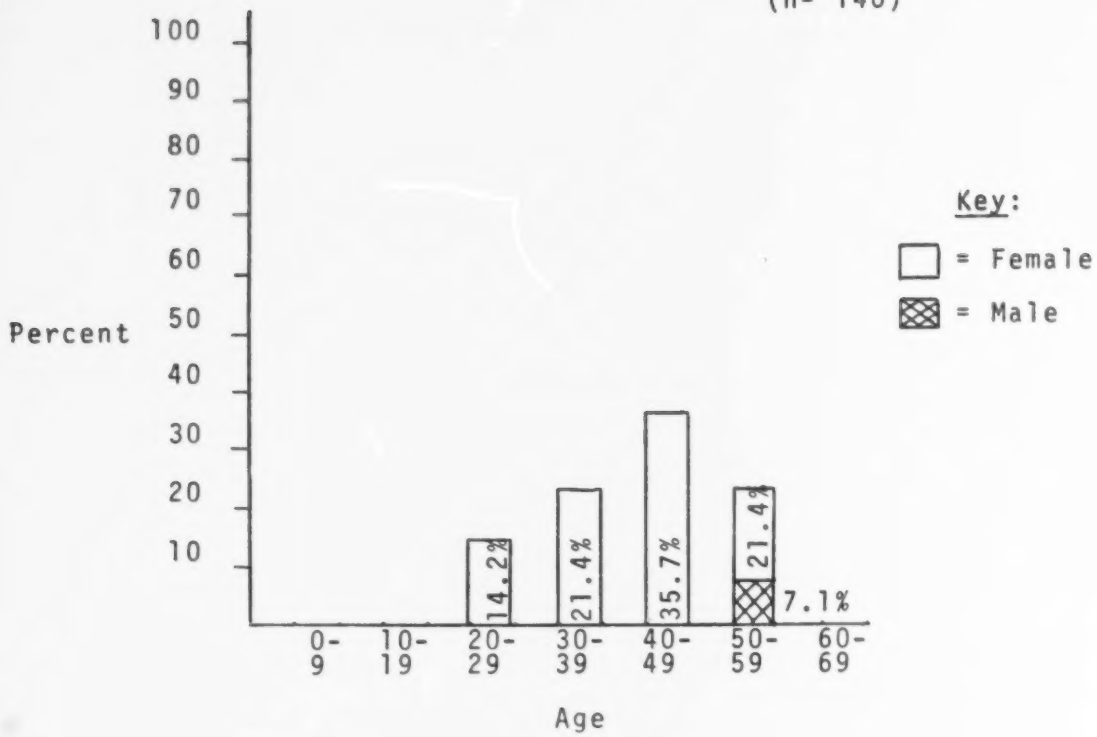

Table II

Study Participants by Ethnicity

(n= 140)

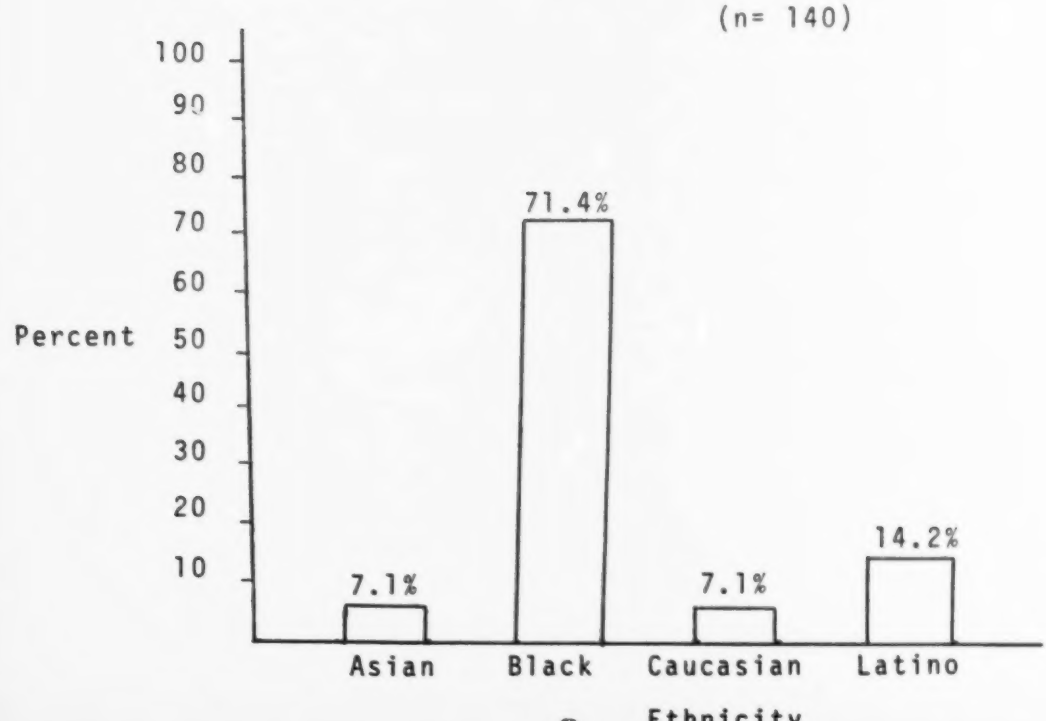

Table III

Survey of Gerontological Studies and Services Majors

NAME _____ Soc. Sec. No. _____
Last First Maiden

ADDRESS _____ Phone _____

_____ Zip _____

1. What is your student status a York? ___ Fresh. ___ Soph. ___ Jr. ___ Sr. ___ Alumni
2. If Alumni, what year did you graduate? 19____
3. Did you begin at York as a freshman?

____ 1. Yes

____ 2. No, I transferred with a degree from _____

____ 3. No, I transferred, *without* a degree from _____

EMPLOYMENT

4. Are you currently employed outside the home?

____ 1. Yes, full time

____ 2. Yes, part time

____ 3. No. (Go to Question 13)

5. For whom do you work and what kind of work do you do?

Employer _____
(Name of employer or organization)

_____
(Address) (Zip)

_____
(Phone)

Specific job title _____

6. Are you now, or have you ever been a volunteer in your community?

____ 1. No

____ 2. Yes, How many hours per month? _____

____ 3. I used to volunteer.

Please identify the type of facility or agency you used or now do volunteer at:

_____
(Name)

_____
(Address)

_____

_____
(Specific Role)

7. How related is your present job to the major program you were enrolled in at York?

____ 1. Directly related

____ 2. Somewhat related

____ 3. Not related at all

8. Which statement best describes how you regard your job?

_____ 1. Employment with definite potential for advancement

_____ 2. Employment with possible potential for advancement

_____ 3. Employment with little or no potential for advancement

_____ 4. Temporary employment until I can find something else

9. How long have you held this job?

_____ 1. Less than one year

_____ 2. 1 to 2 years

_____ 3. 2 to 5 years

_____ 4. 5 to 10 years

_____ 5. Over 10 years

10. Do you supervise any employees and/or volunteers as part of your job?

_____ 1. No

_____ 2. Yes, number of people _____

11. Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?

_____ 1. Very satisfied

_____ 2. Satisfied

_____ 3. Dissatisfied

_____ 4. Very dissatisfied

12. What is your present annual salary before taxes?

_____ 1. Under $10,000

_____ 2. $10,000 – $14,999

_____ 3. $15,000 – $19,999

_____ 4. $20,000 – $24,999

_____ 5. $25,000 – $29,999

_____ 6. $30,000 and higher

} Go to Question 14

13. What is the main reason you are *not working now?* (check one)

_____ 1. Continuing my education full time

_____ 2. Looking for a job, but unable to find anything suitable

_____ 3. Gave up looking, unable to find any job

_____ 4. Illness or disability

_____ 5. Laid off from last job

_____ 6. Family responsibilities

_____ 7. Other (please specify) _____

EDUCATION

14. Since your graduation from York have you enrolled in another educational program?

_____ 1. No (Go to Question 19) _____ 2. Yes

15. Did you complete this program?

_____ 1. No _____ 2. Yes, year of completion _____

16. In what type of program are/were you enrolled?

_____ 1. Masters

_____ 2. Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D.)

_____ 3. Professional (Law, Medicine, Dentistry, Theology, etc.)

_____ 4. Certificate/Licensure

_____ 5. Other (please specify) _____

17. What is/was your major? _____

18. In what school are/were you enrolled? _____

19. Do you plan to enroll in another formal education program?

_____ 1. No

_____ 2. Yes, please specify _____
(name)

ASSESSMENT OF THE YORK COLLEGE GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM

20. Listed below are required courses for GSS majors at York. Please indicate how useful each course has been to you in your job.

Use this code to respond. Circle one number for each item.

0 = Never took Course
1 = Useful
2 = Moderately useful
3 = Useless
4 = Can't remember

a. Introduction to Gerontology I	0	1	2	3	4
b. Introduction to Gerontology II	0	1	2	3	4
c. Psychology of Geriatrics	0	1	2	3	4
d. Psychology of Death of Dying	0	1	2	3	4
e. Health Needs of the Elderly	0	1	2	3	4
f. Social Welfare Programs	0	1	2	3	4
g. Psychological Consequences of Chronic Disabilities	0	1	2	3	4
h. Social Work Practice I	0	1	2	3	4
i. Health Counseling	0	1	2	3	4
j. Health Behavior	0	1	2	3	4
k. Health Behavior Lab	0	1	2	3	4
l. Program Planning	0	1	2	3	4
m. Recreation: Organization & Leadership	0	1	2	3	4
n. Physical Activity for Special Populations	0	1	2	3	4
o. Biology of Aging	0	1	2	3	4
p. Sociology of Aging	0	1	2	3	4
q. Politics of Aging	0	1	2	3	4
r. Human Aging Cross-Culturally	0	1	2	3	4
s. Field Work (6)	0	1	2	3	4
t. Cooperative Education (10)	0	1	2	3	4

21. Based on your work experience now, are there any courses or experiences you think should be added to the Gerontological Studies & Services program?

_____

_____

22. We are interested in any comments or suggestions you may have about the Gerontological Studies & Services Program.

_____

_____

_____

_____

PERSONAL

23. Which of the following ethnic categories best describes you?

_____ 1. Asian or Pacific Islander

_____ 2. Black (non-Latino)

_____ 3. Puerto Rican

_____ 4. Other Latino

_____ 5. White (non-Latino)

_____ 6. Other - Identify _____

24. Sex:

_____ 1. Male _____ 2. Female

25. How old are you? _____ years

26. Do you wish to receive a copy of the results of this survey?

_____ 1. Yes _____ 2. No

27. Would you be willing to have your name and place of employment on file to serve as a resource for the Gerontological Studies & Services Program at York?

_____ 1. Yes _____ 2. No

Please mail this questionnaire in the enclosed postage paid envelope by Friday, August 15, 1986.

Thank you for your assistance and early response.

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